

Advent Lutheran Church Houston:
Open Letter to Church Council – July 28, 2011

To: Advent Lutheran Church Council

James Cassens, Mark Dentler, Tim Heine, Peggy Leonhardt, Leslie Holmes, Rodney
Leonhardt Jr., Betty Louis, Terry Rodgers, Joel Vest, Shirley Taloff

Fm: Charlie Dean

Date: July 28, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen of our Church Council:

I regret the need to communicate with you this way. However, you hide behind your executive sessions and abuse the system in other ways to make communication difficult.

I want to draw your attention to some basic fundamental points of property and authority. Council members cannot enlarge their authority by (1) hiding behind executive sessions, (2) refusing to put something on the public agenda, (3) writing about authority they would like to have in over-arching terms, (4) sending a self-serving letter to a church member and insisting that he sign it and deliver it to the office, or (5) hiding information from church members. New authority can only come about if, and when, the congregation amends the Constitution.

Presently the Council refuses to publish its agenda, so as a result the congregation does not know what the Board's plans are. Approved minutes are not published, leaving the congregation in the dark. This material belongs to all of us—it is not your personal property.

If a church member wants to review church records to verify the validity or value of Council's actions, there seems to be no source for accessing such material. Such material, if it exists, seems to be well hidden from the congregation.

Council fails to give reasonable explanation for its spending practices. A lot of money is spent outside of Houston. Some leaves the state, and some leaves the country. The congregation is only given the option of accepting or rejecting a budget. It would be reasonable to capture the congregation's feelings about each item on the budget. Council spent many hours on the ELSA gay & lesbian matter, and had two surveys the results of which were published to the congregation. You could do the same for your \$353,000.00 plus budget. Doing so would show fiscal responsibility. Perhaps there is justification for your otherwise spendthrift practices. Such information, if it exists, is well hidden from the congregation. I cannot read your minds—I can only judge your actions. You act like the congregation's primary job is to show up, ask no questions, and bring more money.

Council continues to hide digital material from the congregation. The material in question was "born digital," and resides on the church's computer. This belongs to all of us—it is not your

personal property. Council's censorship against the congregation does not reasonably advance the mission of Advent. It is puzzling why Council members are so squeamish about openness and transparency with the congregation. You are not "protecting" anything; you are being ridiculous.

You have rewritten the Constitution and published it to some church members, but not to other church members. This new (proposed) Constitution seems to be well hidden from the general congregation. It would not cost anything to publish it on a Web page so we could all review it. This belongs to all of us—it is not your personal property.

I really do want to believe that your actions are/were supported by reasonable and adequate information. However, with Council's practice of hoarding and hiding so much information from the congregation, this is not possible. With all due respect to individual members of Council, when you act as a group, your service is lacking. You appear to have the notion that no church member should question, in any form or fashion, Council's actions. With all due respect, I encourage you to read up on **mission creep** and **mission substitution**.

Please visit this Web site:

Advent's Information Technology & Research Group (IT&G Group)

<https://sites.google.com/site/itrgroupadvent/> .

Regards,

C. J. Dean